

REMARKS

The Official Action of December 31, 2007, and the prior art relied upon therein have been carefully reviewed. The claims in the application are now only claims 1, 17-19, 28-30 and 37-39, and these claims are believed to be and should be in **condition for allowance consistent with what is stated in the Official Action**. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request favorable consideration and early formal allowance.

Acknowledgement by the PTO of the receipt of applicants' papers filed under Section 119 is noted.

According to paragraph 6 and 7 of the Office Action summary, claims 24-27, 34-36 and 43-45 are not rejected, but are only objected to. Moreover, at the bottom of page 8 of the Office Action, it is stated that claims 24-27, 34-36 and 43-45 are directed to allowable subject matter, and that the prior art of record, taken alone or in combination, does not disclose or make obvious the features of these claims. Applicants accordingly understand that these claims are deemed by the PTO to define novel and unobvious subject matter under Sections 102 and 103, and to otherwise meet all requirements for patentability, including those of Section 112. Applicants are proceeding in reliance thereof.

Accordingly, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the features of allowable claim 24 (thereby making claim 1 correspond with claim 24 rewritten in independent form), claim 28 has been amended to incorporate the features of allowable claim 34 (therefore making claim 28 correspond to claim 34 rewritten in independent form), and claim 37 has been similarly amended to correspond to claim 43 as if it had been rewritten in independent form. The main claims are therefore now directed to subject matter indicated in the Office Action to be allowable, and the remaining dependent claims depend from and incorporate the features of the independent claims. The application should therefore now be in condition for formal allowance.

Claims 1, 18, 19, 28, 30, 37 and 39 have been rejected as obvious under Section 103 from Ziege et al USP 5,100,805 (Ziege) in view of Stabile et al USP 5,854,684 (Stabile). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Nevertheless, applicants need not address this rejection at the present time in view of the amendments made above, whereby claims 1, 28 and 37 now correspond respectively to allowable claims 24, 34 and 43. (It is noted for the record that the amendments made above are made without prejudice to applicants' rights to pursue broader claims in a continuing application, if applicants choose to do so, in which case applicants would rely on Sections 120 and 119.)

Withdrawal of the rejection is in order and is respectfully requested.

Claims 17, 29 and 38 have been rejected under Section 103 as obvious from Ziege in view of Stabile and further in view of Shen et al USP 5,768,407 (Shen). This rejection is also respectfully traversed.

However, as pointed out above, claims 17, 29 and 38 now depend from and incorporate the subject matter respectively of allowable claims 1, 28 and 37, and are therefore allowable at least because they incorporate the features of such allowable claims.

Withdrawal of the rejection is in order and is respectfully requested.

Claims 20, 31 and 40 have been rejected as obvious under Section 103 from Ziege in view of Stabile and further in view of Patel USP 4,580,895 (Patel). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Such claims are not presently pending, so applicants need not address this rejection at the present time. (For the record, such claims have been deleted without prejudice to applicants' rights to pursue such or similar claims in a continuing application, if applicants choose to do so.)

Claims 21-23, 32-33 and 41-42 have been rejected as obvious under Section 103 from Ziege in view of Stabile and Patel and further in view of Shen. This rejection is also respectfully traversed.

The rejected claims have been cancelled without prejudice, and thus are no longer pending, whereby applicants need not address this rejection at the present time. (However, applicants respectfully reserve the right to pursue these and/or similar claims in a continuing application, without prejudice, relying on Sections 120 and 119).

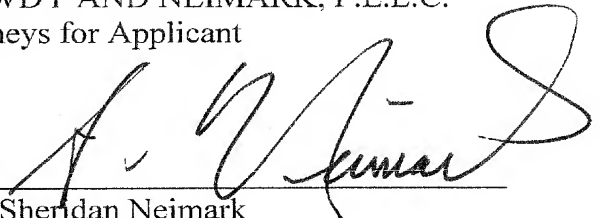
The prior art documents of record and not relied upon by the PTO have been noted, along with the implication that such documents are deemed by the PTO to be insufficiently material to warrant their application against any of applicants' claims.

Applicants believe that all issues raised in the Official Action have been addressed above in a manner that should lead to patentability of the present application. Favorable consideration and early formal allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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